Ex-Pittsburgh Coroner Acquitted on Charges —He Used Job for Profit

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PITTSBURGH, May 23 — Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, a forensic pathologist accused of diverting more than $115,000 in services to his private laboratory while he was Allegheny County Coroner, has been acquitted by a jury.

Five of the six criminal charges filed last year against Dr. Wecht were dropped before the six-week trial ended this week. The jury found him not guilty of the remaining charge, theft of services, which the District Attorney's office contended involved the illegal use of the county morgue and county personnel for Dr. Wecht's personal profit.

Dr. Wecht, who has degrees in both law and medicine, is serving his first term as an Allegheny County Commissioner and also as Democratic Party chairman of Allegheny County. After his acquittal, he called for the resignation of District Attorney Robert Colville, who earlier this week won the Democratic nomination for Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

On Sept. 4, 1980, a grand jury recommended that Dr. Wecht be prosecuted. In the trial the prosecution charged that Dr. Wecht used three morgue employees to perform tissue tests for Pittsburgh Pathology and Toxicology Laboratory Inc., which he owned from 1974 to 1979.

Skills Lauded at Trial

Dr. Wecht, 50 years old, is a former President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. At the trial his medical skills were lauded by pathologists who were defense witnesses and challenged by pathologists who testified for the state.

In 1978 Dr. Wecht disagreed with eight other pathologists who testified before a House Assassination Committee in support of the Warren Commission's conclusion that there was no conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy.

Dr. Wecht testified that he could not subscribe to the "magic bullet" theory, which held that one bullet fired by Lee Harvey Oswald could have gone through President Kennedy's neck, then struck John B. Connally, who was Governor of Texas. "Once you eliminate the single-bullet theory, you're in the area of two persons involved," Dr. Wecht told the House panel. "You're in the area of conspiracy."